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ABSTRACT

Data and case studies from research on 116 colleges and universities involved in efforts to develop programs to meet corporate needs for personnel and personnel development are reported. The sample was nominated by a national panel and is regarded as exemplary in efforts at corporate/college partnerships. Responses of presidents and profiles of institutional efforts are included. It is found that studying labor market needs and fashioning programs to fit students into the market after graduation can be important elements of successful programs. Expansion of on- and off-campus business and technical programs plus a reorganization of course requirement structure was necessary in some programs. Cooperative efforts among corporations and colleges have been increasing, but in-house corporate programs have also increased. In some college programs, credit is given for on-the-job experience as well as coursework. The biggest roadblock from an institutional point of view seems to be the usual lag in program start-up time for a new course or program, at least a year in most cases. Tooling up to offer specialty courses can be a problem for small institutions. Targeting efforts in one or two program areas can help the institution's program effectiveness. Rigorous testing and evaluation are recommended to dispel institutional concern over giving credit for corporate in-house work over which the college has little control. College/corporate sharing of resources and efforts is seen as a key to successful cooperative programs. (MSE)

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College/Corporate Partnerships: Studies in Cooperative Efforts in Education and Staff Development

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Conservative estimates of the amount of money spent on corporate education and training range from $4 to $6 billion annually. Where expenditures of this magnitude were considered as unfeasible in former years, corporate education and training is more and more considered a route to increased productivity and increased corporate earnings.

The needs for this education are rooted in demands to accommodate turnover and personnel growth, to accommodate changes in knowledges and skills and to improve skills and performance. Assisting colleges and universities through intern programs and cooperative education is seen as a complement to efforts in this area.

A study of Fortune 500 companies in 1975 revealed that some 3.5 million employees had participated in courses during work hours, that another 700,000 were enrolled in courses after working hours and that total faculty employed full-time by the 450 firms numbered well over 45,000.[1] Many of the courses were college level in nature and at least three firms had received accreditation for the graduate degree programs they offered as a part of their staff development efforts.

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This analysis reports data and case studies from research on 116 colleges and universitites involved in efforts to develop programs to meet corporate needs for personnel and personnel development. The sample was nominated by a national panel and is regarded as exemplary in efforts at corporate/college partnerships. This article reports on responses of presidents regarding emphases and thrusts in this area and profiles four of seven

institutions selected for in depth study of operations. The research was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Education.

Presidents in the sample of institutions were asked to respond to a Likert instrument containing 25 ways (cast as initiatives) to use labor market data in planning for the fortunes of their institutions. This was a double scale instrument where a first scale was provided for a rating of the degree to which the initiative was employed and a second scale was provided for a rating of the value accorded such an initiative by planners on the campus in question. After analyses of the scale data, seven institutions were accorded in-depth study of three days each.

The findings revealed that all of the top ten initiatives had to do with studying labor market needs and trends of corporations and government and with trying to fashion programs to enable students to fit into these markets upon graduation. A large number of institutions were involved in careful study of the needs of corporations and government for in-service training of personnel and had set about fashioning programs to service these needs.

Expansion of the business and technical programs both on and off the campuses plus a reorganization of the course requirement structure was a necessary ingredient for the success of the effort and many seemed to be able to bring this about. At Alma College in Michigan, for example, a student can complete a major in English, a double major (or a shorter program of emphasis) in business or corporate communication and do an internship in a Michigan corporation for a semester's credit. In his or her senior year, daily van trips to corporate centers for interviews are available. A continuing education program provides courses in business and economics at night for graduates who locate in the service or commuting area of the college. The partnership between the college and the corporation begins early in the college years and continues

as in-service experiences long after graduation.

The Alma in-service efforts are modest indeed when compared to some of the far-flung service operations of a neighboring regional state university: Central Michigan University. With programs offered for corporations and government installations stretching from the Azores to Hawaii, this institution laughingly notes that "the sun never sets on Central Michigan."

An in-service operation more to the scale of the average university is that of the Hartford Graduate Center, a cluster of modern buildings in downtown Hartford and a spin-off of a branch of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. At its June 1980 graduation exercises, 220 students received master's degrees. All were part-time students. All were sponsored by their corporations and all received substantial tuition and released time from the 80 or so companies which employed them.

The degrees pursued by this class offer insight into the directions planners might take to tap the corporate in-service market. Business administration and management sciences led the list followed in no set order by computer sciences, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, and, surprisingly, health care management.

The Conference Board study of corporate spending on education (Education in Industry) also offers guidance to planners.[2] Among the 700 or so firms surveyed, 97 percent of those employing 10,000 or more persons, 95 percent of those employing 5000 or more, 91 percent employing over 2500, 94 percent of those hiring 1000 and more and 82 percent of those with as few as 500 people offered tuition aid for after hours study. The percentage of firms sponsoring courses for their employees at colleges, universitites, associations and consulting firms ranged from 66 to 90. Of the $4 billion or so

spent on this effort in 1975, the Board estimates that 24 percent was spent on management and supervisory courses with the remainder spent on the introduction of new production methods or the standardization of old ones.

This is a steadily expanding education and training effort with the forces of new knowledge and scientific breakthroughs driving it on. The volume of scientific and technical information doubles every eight years, it seems, and the successful firm is the one which keeps abreast of this change by constantly adding to the skills of its people.

Cooperative efforts by corporations and colleges are increasingly easing the burden of education and staff development. The program development for such efforts can be difficult to bring about, however, and this fact accounts for the rapid increase in in-house corporate education programs. These increases occur in many communities with colleges and universities which are increasingly operating at less than plantand faculty capacity.

The successful partnerships have managed to take a close look at the forces impeding the development of cooperative arrangements and to find a way to work around them. The cooperative bachelor's program of the National Association of Bank Women and Simmons, Mundlein, Pitzer and Louisiana State University is a case in point. Bank women can win a bachelor's degree in management in three to five years with minimum career interruption in this program. Academic credit is awarded for on-the-job experience for a portion of the degree requirements. Evening courses, in-house courses and management institutes on the cooperating institutions' campuses make up the rest.

This type of innovative planning and thinking must characterize successful efforts at planning for college/corporation partnerships, it seems. Attempts to put oneself in the other's shoes seem to bear fruit for both organizations in the long run. The themes running through the case studies of institutions

studied in depth for the NIE research project bear this out.

From the corporate view, opportunities to have their people enroll in courses and programs relevant to their operations is crucial to the decision to fashion a cooperative relationship. General management courses can always serve as a starter but progress from that point depends heavily on the aiblity and willingness of the college or university to tailor offerings to changing technical and management needs and to do this with a modicum of dispatch. Corporate officers would rather have the collegiate institution offer the course or program as it enhances the corporate image and offers a valuable fringe benefit which can be used to attract top-notch personnel. The decision to offer in-house study is made when things cannot be worked out for one reason or another.

The biggest roadblock from an institutional point of view seems to be the traditional lag in start-up time for a new course or program. At least a year is involved on the average campus for approval of the myriad committees for a new course and over two years can separate a request for a new program and its final approval on many campuses. Cutting this lag in start-up time is crucial to planners interested in corporate partnerships. Two years represents fully one-fourth of the period in which new technological knowledge doubles itself. Corporations can't wait that long.

Central Michigan solved the problem of start-up time by creating an Institute for Personnel and Career Development and granting certain powers of course and program approval to its controlling committee. CMU can now offer a new course tailored to specifications of new technology in six weeks and it can offer a new program in less than six months. All three of the major automobile manufacturers utilize their courses and programs for technical and management in-service development as does a hundred or more firms in the Great Lakes industrial crescent. CMU also offers in-service work for such diverse

organizations as Head Start and the U.S. Army's Project Ahead. The latter is a new program which offers high school graduates the opportunity to enroll at a cooperating college or university, join the army, complete degree requirements at a network of "Servicemen's Opportunity Colleges" throughout the world, have the credits transferred to the cooperating college and return there to receive or complete the degree upon discharge from the Army. CMU serves as both a CCU (cooperating colleges and universities) and as SOC (service men's opportunity college). In the latter role, the university is part of a consortium of six institutions serving the Tropic Lightning Division of the U.S. Army in Hawaii (the Twenty-Fifth Infantry). Project Ahead means business. The offerings of this consortium are packaged neatly in a handsome catalogue replete with degree requirements and the regulations of the "University".

The latter is appropriately called Tropic Lightning University and the insignia of the division (a yellow lightning bolt on a red field) decorates the catalogue cover. Other consortia offer SOC courses and programs at division bases throughout the continental United States and in Europe. Some notable "universities" are old Faithful (9th Infantry of Fort Lewis, Washington) and Screaming Eagle (82nd Airborne of Fort Bragg, North Carolina).

The U.S. Air Force has met the Army challenge in training by establishing its own college: The Community College of the Air Force. CCAF now enrolls 100,000 students. The school now offers credit for the Air Force's 2800 technical courses and arranges for tuition-aided instruction on and off base at local colleges. Seven major Air Force technical schools offer the main core of instruction and all have been accredited by college and university accrediting associations (Southern and North Central). All credit is transmitted via computer to headquarters and the CCAF registrar at Randolph Field in Texas. The CCAF diploma is a wonder to behold: red, white and blue with

an Air Force insignia emblazoned front and center.

Tooling up to offer specialty courses can be a problem for small and middle-sized institutions. CMU solves much of this by hiring adjunct personnel and by encouraging flexibility in faculty manpower for the university itself. This can be difficult. The new Carnegie report on colleges and universities (Three-Thousand Futures) points out that an aging, heavily tenured faculty will characterize higher education in the decades ahead as truncated birth rates bring steady state or declining enrollments and little opportunity for expansion and the bringing aboard of new blood.[3] Alma College provides for summer jobs, consultantships and general close working relationships of its faculty with corporations. The program is aimed more at enabling faculty to advise students properly in Alma's broad program of meshing liberal arts with careers. But the technique can be one of keeping faculty members abreast of the new techno-management processes. A general comprehensive college or university policy thrust aimed at assuring flexibility in faculty resources is the key, however. The total package for such a thrust would include the faculty/firm ties and more: provisions for paid further study at institutes or firms for advanced study, creative use of short-term professorships, provisions for half-time service for older faculty with no resulting loss in take-home earnings and on and on. We are currently studying exemplary institutions in this respect and preliminary findings indicate that efforts in this area can bear fruit.

Targeting of effort can be a wise decision for institutions contemplating a cooperative arrangement. St. Cloud State University of Minnesota is a regional state university which enrolls about 12,000 students. It offers its students a wide range of internship opportunities in almost every department and it offers a wide array of administration and management courses to Minnesota corporate personnel in its service area. Officials decided some

years ago that it would concentrate advanced expertise in two programs: Quantitative Management Information Systems and Photographic Engineering. This concentration has borne fruit and the school is widely hailed as being among the best in these areas. In-service work for corporate personnel flows naturally from these excellent programs.

The bread and butter offering of most colleges and universities seem to be the afternoon and evening courses offered in convenient locations for corporate personnel. The decisions regarding the courses to offer are made on the basis of needs surveys for the most part and the successful operation is characterized by a high degree of sophistication in this respect.

Colorado Mountain College does this as well as any. This is a remarkable community college which serves five counties in Western Colorado. Main campuses are located in Glenwood Springs and Leadville and some 1200 fulltime students are enrolled on these campuses. Satellite centers are located in 12 communities throughout the counties and these centers enroll 12,000 part-time students!

One of CMC's more exciting prospects is the development of shale oil mining programs. EXXON and other corporations have experimented with shale oil production methods for years in the region and the officials of the CMC centers have offered a few courses for personnel in this area. All of the economic factors now seem to be nearing a point where mass production of shale oil will become economically feasible and CMC officials and corporate leaders are now planning degree programs for a variety of personnel which will be needed to man these operations.

Just as exciting is the prospect of large scale gasohol operations involving oil corporations and plains farmers utilizing the latest in irrigation equipment. A self-propelled irrigation boom is now available, it seems,

which will roll itself around in a great circle irrigating 120 acres of corn as it goes. A young exuberant enterpreneur eagerly explained the intricacies to a visitor a few years ago while noting that he (and the bank) held title to ten of the things and rental leases on 5000 acres of land. The water was to come from the Colorado river. CMC teaches much of this technology. One often wonders about the fortunes of the young entrepreneur--and the bank. The thought comes up from time to time as new signs are noted for the sale of gasohol.

Deciding on cooperative arrangements for the award of credit can be a problem for some institutions. More and more corporations are teaching in-house courses and asking local colleges to offer credit for what is taught. At the same time, other firms are seeking to offer credit themselves for in-house courses and many are taking advantage of the American Council on Education's program for evaluation of college level instruction in corporation offerings. The latest ACE compliation contains over 1100 courses offered by more than 100 corporations and agencies, all having won the coveted ACE recommendation for award of credit.[4] Some corporations are doing both and their numbers grow and seem to include some of the more familiar names: Xerox, Lockheed, Holiday Inn, TWA, Bank of America, IBM, General Electric and John Hancock. Four of these (IBM, XEROX, AT&T AND GE) now offer the bachelor's degree. The Rand Corporation offers the Ph.D. in policy analysis and Arthur D. Little offers a master's.

Union College of Schenectady, New York, honors requests from General Electric for the award of credit toward a bachelor's degree for courses offered by GE trainers in power systems engineering. For the most part, the students are workers with community college associate degrees. Union's decision to offer credit is based on many factors. Cooperative arrangements between

college and corporation help bring good workers to Schenectady. Credit for a few courses at the corportation whets the appetite of students and many continue in Union's extensive continuing education program. The corporation aids Union in a myriad of ways: provision of internship slots, fund raising and more.

The successful cooperative relationship will more and more be characterized by these credit sharing arrangements. This is especially true of larger firms where in-house education is expanding. The uneasiness of university officials about granting credit for work over which they have little control can be dispelled or at least lessened by the application of rigorous evaluation and approval procedures now available through the American Council on Education.[5] There is a line to be drawn of course and most institutions will not hesitate to draw it. Some portion of the specialized courses and most of the general education core will probably be taught by college and university faculty in most arrangements in the foreseeable future. But the whetting of appetites, the utilization of plant and corporation courses in lieu of huge expenditures for equipment on campus and more will weigh heavily in cooperative arrangements for credit in the future.

What of the future of college/corporate partnerships in education and staff development? It is very probable that business involvement in education will increase. The large corporation can indeed provide excellent training in specific job skills and it can do it quickly and with dispatch.

It is true that many firms want the prestige and benefits of college credit for their employees and that they will work with colleges and universities to arrange this. It is also true that most American people work for small and medium size firms rather than for large corporations and studies have shown that these firms are more apt to arrange for local institutions to

offer courses and programs than make the investment of setting up their own programs. It is here, in the second and third Fortune 500, that most growth potential for cooperative arrangements is likely to be found.

When the burgeoning growth of internships for college and university students is added to this scenario, the future of college/corporate partnerships looks very bright indeed. Wise college and university planners will view their institutions's role as education in its broadest sense (instead of standard course giving and degree granting) and think creatively in leading their institutions into this changing world. Many observers have noted that the great flaw in the thinking of railroad planners was that they considered their primary mission as railroading when they should have thought of it as transportation. College and university planners will, of course, avoid such pitfalls

Finally, while college and university partnerships with corporations will enable institutions to share in the burgeoning growth of in-service education, they will not replace corporate efforts in this area and, of course, most institutional planners have no wish to do this. There is not enough plant and capacity and faculty in academe to do it and even less faculty interest in doing it. The key word is share. Some institutions will do little in the area while others will expand considerably. Meanwhile, corporations will continue to expand their educational programs and colleges and degree structures. Many are small countries in and of themselves and expansion of an educational system should not be viewed with too much alarm. General Motors, for example, employs a million people, operates in nearly 100 countries and has an annual budget which exceeds the entire gross national product of Switzerland. Rapid start-ups, exquisite technical instruction, concentrated all-day instruction, and more are needed for personnel development in the firm. Much of it will be needed in places where local college and university capability is simply unavailable and where prospects for its development are

dim. The corporation college comes into play here with cooperative relationships reserved for other situations of a more suitable nature. In any case, the college and university which seeks to share in the new developments will find as much as they can do and even more if they put their best mind and effort to the task

FOOTNOTES

[1]Lusterman Seymour, Education in Industry (New York: The Conference Board, 1977), pp. 50-51.

[2]Ibid P. 49

[3]Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, Three Thousand Futures: The Next Twenty Years in Higher Education (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1980).

[4]American Council on Education, The National Guide to Credit Recommendations for Non Collegiate Courses (Washington: American Council on Education, 1979).

[5]Ibid